

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



A Publication of the Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch

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Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

Victim Services is a combination of education, advocacy and support for victims of crime. At the Metropolitan Police Department, the Victim Services Branch serves as a point of contact for victims of crime in the District of Columbia. We possess clear values about helping victims

understand the criminal justice process. Upon interacting with us, victims are provided advocacy toward the goal of fair treatment for survivors. Through our systematic advocacy, we ensure victims have access to detectives assigned to his/her case at the Metropolitan Police Department. And ultimately, the support

that is offered is effective as survivors are connected with agencies/organizations that bring about meaningful change in the community. At the Metropolitan Police Department, advocacy is action. So follow us as we continue to take the lead in this worthwhile journey.

Upcoming Events and Activities

Ongoing

Survivors of Homicide Support Group Meeting

Last Thursday of every Month
7-8 pm

This support group is for secondary victims who have lost a love one to homicide. In the support group secondary victims are given an opportunity to express themselves on how they are coping with their loss and are provided with some strategies and tactic to assist them through the process.

For more information please call Survivors of Homicide at (202) 258-2564.

Howard University Campus
530 College Street, NW
Washington, DC 20059

April 2013

National Crime Victims' Rights Week April 21-27

During the month of April since 1981, the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) has diligently assisted communities throughout the nation by observances of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) by promoting victims' rights and honoring crime victims and those who advocate on their

behalf. The theme for NCVRW 2013 is "New Challenges. New Solutions." and the theme colors are midnight blue and orange.

For additional information visit: www.ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw

Next of Kin

Victim Services Branch (Family Liaison Unit)
April 22 – 26 // 12-8 pm

During the week of National Crime Victims' Rights Week — the Family Liaison Unit will host Next-of-Kin (NOK) Meetings. These meetings will provide families an opportunity to meet with detectives concerning their loved one's cases. The NOK meetings will be held at 101 M Street, SW, Washington, DC (Homicide Branch), and if you would like to schedule appointments between the hours of 12 and 8 pm, please contact Carla Okonkwo on (202) 645-6363.

June 2013

Wendt Center Fifth Annual Memorial Butterfly Release: In Remembrance of Someone You Love

Saturday, June 8 // 2-5 pm

Release a butterfly and hear the name of your loved one read aloud

during a special commemorative ceremony.

Garfield Park., 3rd & G Streets, SE
Washington, DC

For more information and detailed direction visit www.wendtbutterflies.org or call Kecia Hill (202) 204-5025 / email khill@wendtcenter.org

Wendt Center Camp Forget-Me-Not/ Camp Erin DC

Friday, June 21 – Sunday, June 23

Camp Forget-Me-Not/Camp Erin DC was established for children 6-16 years of age on the belief that every person deserves the opportunity to express his or her feelings or grief in a supportive and understanding environment. The camp is not designed as a replacement for therapy but as an enjoyable opportunity to explore grief where a child's self expression is heard, valued and honored.

Arlington Eco Educational Center
Millersville, Maryland

For Camper Information, call Cynthia Pearson at (202) 204-5022 or email cpearson@wendtcenter.org
<http://wendtcenter.org>

—Submitted by Dawn Christie

National Crime Victims Rights Week: New Challenges, New Solutions



This year’s National Crime Victims’ Rights Week will focus on “Transforming Victim Services.” Despite the progress made in the past there are still many challenges to overcome. Approximately 50 percent of violent crimes are not reported to law enforcement; as a result many victims are not aware of and do not receive services. One challenge

in the field of victim services is to connect with these victims to better serve them. The goal of the Metropolitan Police Department’s Victim Services Branch (VSB) is to reach every victim and educate them on our services as well as services in the community. VSB staff conducts monthly outreach to educate the community about services and resources available to victims. Our objective

is to empower victims with resources so that they are able to make informed decisions. The Metropolitan Police Department continues its commitment to ensure all victims, regardless of their language, are educated on services. This year National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is observed April 21–27.

Submitted by Marlene Castro

District’s Medical Examiner Moves to New Home in Southwest

As of November 19, 2012, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) relocated to a new facility, the Consolidated Forensic Laboratory (CFL) located at 401 E Street, SW. Visitors to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner are limited to individuals conducting official business. It is important for next of kin to be aware of the security restrictions in place at this new facility. The legal identification process of the decedent is made by photograph between the hours of 10 AM and 4:30 PM by the next of kin. Due to the security restrictions, no more than three family members are authorized to enter the facility at one time, and persons less than 18 years of age are not allowed on the premises. Grief counselors from the Recover Program under the Wendt Center for Loss and Healing are still in place at the OCME’s new facility to support individuals during the identification process. For more information regarding services provided by the DC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner,



please visit their website at <http://ocme.dc.gov>, or contact:

DC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
401 E Street, SW
6th Floor
Washington, DC 20024
Phone: (202) 698-9000
Fax: (202) 698-9101
Email: ocme@dc.gov
Recover Program: (202) 698-9078

In cases where a homicide victim was brought to a hospital in Maryland, the decedent’s remains are taken to the Maryland Medical Examiner’s Office in Baltimore. Next of kin are not authorized to make

identifications at the Medical Examiner’s Office in Baltimore. In Maryland, decedents are identified through forensic methods and confirmed by law enforcement. For information or to obtain a copy of your loved one’s autopsy report from the Maryland State Medical Examiner’s Office, please contact:

Maryland Office of Chief Medical Examiner
900 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
(410) 333-3274
<http://dhmh.maryland.gov/ocme/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Submitted by Megan Riley

Five Myths about Counseling

The traumatic experiences from grief and loss can often cause changes in behavior that impact the essence of one’s very being. To assist in the healing process of trauma, feelings, emotions and pain of loss, counseling is frequently recommended. Yet, as individuals, families and survivors experience crisis and traumatic events, there may exist a hesitance or a reluctance to participate in counseling in general. Often these myths are permeated through the media images that we see. Seeking help and support through trauma requires getting past the various myths surrounding trauma counseling and support therapy. See if you can recognize the realities that dispel the common myths listed below:

Myth #1: Counseling is for crazy people

Reality: Many people who attend counseling are bright, skilled, and stable people. These individuals are often struggling with problems in a specific area and seeking

personal growth and development. Stressors and difficulties are a part of life for all people. Many argue that the ability to ask for and accept counseling help represents clear evidence of intelligence and sanity.

Myth # 2: Counseling is only for severe problems

Reality: Most individuals seek counseling for everyday issues like relationship problems, stress, and symptoms of depression. It is true that counseling can be helpful for individuals suffering from severe problems. However, seeking counseling for problems at this level does not represent the majority of clients in counseling. Additionally, attending counseling when problems are mild to moderate can prevent problems from becoming severe.

Myth #3: A counselor does not know me and cannot help me

Reality: Actually, this is one of the most important reasons why counseling can be successful. Since a counselor is not

a part of your day to day life, they are capable of being more impartial with less bias. Oftentimes, family and friends tell you what you should do. Counseling involves a unique relationship where you are encouraged and challenged to find the answers that are right for your life.

Myth#4: Counseling takes too long

Reality: The length of counseling depends on the client’s goals, motivation, and the severity of the problems brought into counseling. However, most counseling is short-term, generally lasting between eight and fifteen sessions. Good counselors are invested in helping you meet your goals so you can successfully operate independent of counseling.

Myth #5: Everyone will know that I am seeing a counselor

Reality: Counselors are bound by professional ethics and state law to protect your confidentiality and privacy both during counseling and after

counseling ends. Only in extreme cases where someone is in imminent danger or a judge mandates release of counseling records can confidentiality be broken. Outside of these circumstances, information can only be shared if you share it or you provide written authorization for releasing information. A good counselor will explain confidentiality to you at the beginning of counseling.

Source: Dr. Case-Simonson, A., Licensed Psychotherapist, (2010). *10 Myths about counseling*. Pinecrest Office park 105A Cedar Rock Trace, Athens, GA 30605. To learn more, visit www.drancycasesimonson.com/10-myths-about-counseling

Seek Help When You Need It
In recognition of April as Counseling Awareness Month, we encourage you to consider supportive services if they are warranted. For more information, visit mpdc.dc.gov/victimassistance

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month: It’s Time to Talk About It

The 2013 Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) campaign focuses on healthy sexuality and child sexual abuse prevention. This April, join the conversation about preventing child sexual abuse. Start talking about healthy childhood development to prevent child sexual abuse. Sexual assault awareness month cannot end on April 30.

A person sexually abuses a child when he or she exposes the child to sexual acts or behavior; that child may expe-

rience a variety of short and long term reactions as a consequence of that abuse. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center has developed a selection of resources geared toward Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Information Packet. See more at www.nsvrc.org/publications.

The publications provide information and tools for caretakers, organizations and communities assuming the responsibility of preventing child sexual abuse. Through basic

information on child sexual development, defining sexual abuse, and learning effective strategies we can prepare to take action steps toward prevention. Some resources provided discuss ways to shift cultural norms that maintain abusive systems and behaviors toward one of our most vulnerable populations: Children. Check out these resources to help you in preventing child sexual abuse: preventchildabuse.org, stopcsa.org, darkness2light.org, and childwelfare.gov.

Submitted by Esther Urbano Thomas

New Network Hopes to Offer More Tools for Victims of Violence



“Every crime has at least one victim.” Victims that have reported crimes to the police may be left wondering how they will get help in their time of distress. The District of Columbia has a number of service providers that work diligently to help victims in their time of need. Programs such as Crime Victim’s Compensation and District Alliance for Safe Housing have been around for some time and are well known in the community. However, new resources are emerging everyday. One of the latest programs established to help victims of violent crime is the

Network for Victim Recovery of DC (NVRDC).

Through Violence Against Women Act grants and grassroots efforts, programs for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking have all been established in the district to help victims of those particular crimes. Many of the previous organizations had limitations on who could be helped based on relationship to the perpetrator, their gender, or their family make-up. In May of 2012, The Network for Victim Recovery of DC was founded as a resource to bridge the gap that existed for all victims of crime.

NVRDC seeks to meet

crime victim’s needs through a four-prong approach. The Network attempts to help the victim obtain a sense of normalcy by addressing legal, mental health, security, and housing issues. They offer criminal and civil legal services, therapy, and advocacy for all victims of crime.

Empowering victims through knowledge is integral to the prevention and reduction of victimization. If you would like more information on NVRDC, please call (202) 742-1727, visit their website at nvrdc.org, like them on Facebook, or follow them on Twitter [@nvrdc](https://twitter.com/nvrdc).

—Submitted By: Kayce Simmons



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Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit
101 M Street, SW
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